

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NICOSIA 1303

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, CY, GR

SUBJECT: MAKARIOS/ATHENS CONFRONTATION

REF: NICOSIA 1276

SUMMARY: MAKARIOS IN RECENT EXCHANGES WITH ATHENS SEEMS DELIBERATELY TO HAVE PRECIPITATED CRISIS, LEAVING NEITHER ATHENS NOR HIMSELF WITH GRACEFUL WAY TO COMPROMISE HIS DEMAND FOR WITHDRAWAL OF GREEK ARMY OFFICERS IN NATIONAL GUARD. WE ASSUME HE MAY HAVE FELT THAT HIS STRATEGIC POSITION IS BETTER BY FACING CRISIS NOW RATHER THAN LATER, AN ESTIMATE PROBABLY REINFORCED BY GENUINE FRUSTRATION AND ANGER. GREEK EMBASSY STILL COUNSELING MODERATION, BUT WE SUGGEST ATHENS' CHOICE WILL BE BETWEEN VIOLENCE (POSSIBLY INCLUDING ASSASSINATION EFFORT) AND DELIBERATE DECISION TO "CUT NICOSIA ADRIFT." FORTUNATELY, UNCERTAINTIES AS TO OUTCOME HERE PLUS TURKISH EQUATION WOULD BOTH SEEM TO ARGUE FOR LATTER COURSE.

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1. MAKARIOS' JULY 2 LETTER TO PRESIDENT OF GREECE (FBIS CARRIES) CONVEYED CALL FOR WITHDRAWAL OF GREEK OFFICERS SERVING IN NATIONAL GUARD AS ANTICIPATED REFTTEL, ASKED FOR "ABOUT 100" OFFICERS AS ADVISERS. LETTER WAS EVEN HARSHER THAN WE ANTICIPATED, RECOUNTED HIS GRIEVANCES OVER EOKA-B, RIGHTIST PRESS, CADET OFFICER ISSUE, AND EFFORTS TO ASSASSINATE HIM. LAID BLAME SQUARELY ON GREEK MILITARY REGIME, WHICH IT ACCUSED OF "DIVIDING THE GREEK CYPRIOT PEOPLE AND PUSHING THEM TO CATASTROPHE THROUGH CIVIL STRIFE...THE GREEK GOVT HAS BEEN FOLLOWING A POLICY CALCULATED TO ABOLISH THE CYPRUS STATE." HE EVEN TAUNTED THE GREEK REGIME WITH A SIDE REFERENCE TO A MILITARY REGIME IN THE BIRTHPLACE OF DEMOCRACY, AND POINTEDLY CLOSED WITH THE OBSERVATION THAT HE WAS "AN ELECTED LEADER OF A LARGE SECTION OF HELLENISM AND I DEMAND AN APPROPRIATE CONDUCT BY THE NATIONAL CENTER TOWARDS ME."

2. LETTER SEEMED DELIBERATELY TO CLOSE DOOR TO COMPROMISE.

3. WE CAN ONLY SPECULATE AS TO WHY MAKARIOS HAS CHOSEN TO ISSUE A CHALLENGE WHICH CONVERTS A CONFRONTATION INTO A FULL FLEDGED CRISIS. HIS ATHENS SOURCES MAY HAVE KEPT HIM INFORMED OF IMPENDING RESIGNATIONS IN GREEK FOREIGN MINISTRY, AND HE MAY HAVE CONCLUDED THAT LAST MODERATE VOICES WERE DEPARTING. POSSIBLY, HE HOPED THAT BY DRAMATIZING HIS CASE AGAINST JUNTA HE COULD EVEN BRING ABOUT GOVT CRISIS IN ATHENS (POSSIBILITY ADVANCED TO US BEFORE THE ANNOUNCED RESIGNATIONS BY GOCYPRUS OFFICIAL). HE MAY HAVE THOUGHT IT NECESSARY TO STRIKE FIRST, TO DESTROY NATIONAL GUARD OFFICERS WHILE BALANCE OF POWER ON ISLAND WAS STILL IN HIS FAVOR. (IN THIS CONNECTION, FACT OF HIS WILLINGNESS TO LAUNCH SUCH A DRAMATIC CONFRONTATION SUGGESTS THAT HE ESTIMATES EOKA-B AS STILL UNABLE TO ENDANGER HIS CONTROL.) FINALLY, LOCAL CENTRISTS HAVE BEEN COMPLAINING OF RISING INFLUENCE OF "LEFTIST ADVISERS" AROUND MAKARIOS (SPECIFICALLY PIO CHRISTODOULOU, WHO HAS HIMSELF BEEN BOASTING OF HIS INFLUENCE AND ROLE IN THESE DEVELOPMENTS). SOME OF HIS ADVISERS IN FACT ARE BITTERLY ANTI-ATHENS, AND THEY MAY HAVE INFLAMED HIS ANGER.

4. MAKARIOS HAS LONG CHAFED AT CONTROL OF NATIONAL GUARD FROM ATHENS. ADDED TO THIS FACTOR NOW IS STRONG EVIDENCE THAT NG
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OFFICERS ARE KEY ELEMENT IN PRINCIPAL THREAT TO HIS AUTHORITY AND INDEED HIS LIFE.

5. MAKARIOS MAY HOPE THAT ANTI-ATHENS LINE WILL UNITE MOST GREEK CYPRIOTS BEHIND HIM, AS HAPPENED IN 1972. WE DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THIS POSSIBILITY, BUT SO FAR THE CRISIS HAS AGAIN DEEPENED THE LOCAL POLARIZATION. MAKARIOS IS BEING FORMALLY SUPPORTED BY MOST MASS ORGANIZATIONS, AND BY THE TWO LEFTIST

PARTIES EDEK AND AKEL (COMMUNIST). CENTRIST UNITED PARTY AND EVEN PROGRESSIVE FRONT HAVE NOT ENDORSED, RIGHT-WING SEEK LABOR UNION HAS DISENGAGED FROM MAKARIOS (RECENT DEFECTION FROM SEK OF GOVT-CONTROLLED CYPRUS AIRWAYS UNION MAY HAVE BEEN RETALIATORY). TONE OF CONSERVATIVE PRESS HAS BEEN MORE CRITICAL OF MAKARIOS THAN ATHENS.

6. HAVING FORCED A SHOWDOWN, WE ASSUME MAKARIOS WILL IN DUE TIME GOAD ATHENS WITH SOME FURTHER ACTIONS (E.G., APPOINTING CYPRIOT OFFICERS TO NATIONAL GUARD POSITIONS) IF IT FAILS TO RESPOND.

7. WE CANNOT JUDGE ATHENS REACTION FROM HERE. TWO HOPEFUL INDICATORS ARE THAT GREEK EMBASSY SEEMS TO BE URGING ATHENS THAT IT ACCEPT DEMAND FOR WITHDRAWAL OF OFFICERS AND RESPOND TO REQUEST FOR ADVISERS (SEPTEL). MOREOVER, "ELEFTHEROS KOSMOS" EDITOR CONSTANTOPOULOS (LONG-TIME GO-BETWEEN) UNEXPECTEDLY FLEW IN FROM ATHENS JULY 8 AND IMMEDIATELY MET WITH MAKARIOS.

8. DESPITE THESE SIGNS, WE FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT IOANNIDES WILL MEEKLY ACCEPT MAKARIOS' LETTER. GREEK EMBASSY OFFICER ADMITS THAT "MILITARY COLLEAGUES" ADVOCATE EITHER A DIRECT CONFRONTATION OR TOTAL RENUNCIATION OF GREEK RESPONSIBILITY FOR ISLAND'S WELL BEING. WE ASSUME IOANNIDES IS WEIGHING PRECISELY THAT CHOICE. IF HE GOES FOR CONFRONTATION, WE ASSUME THAT ASSASSINATION EFFORT WILL BE HIS MOST LIKELY DEVICE, IF OUR READING OF EOKA-B STRENGTH IS CORRECT. CONSEQUENCES OF COURSE INCALCULABLE, BUT MAKARIOS' REMARK ABOUT "CATASTROPHE THROUGH CIVIL STRIFE" IS PROBABLY NOT FAR OFF. IF GOGREECE DECIDES TO WASH HANDS OF CYPRUS, WE ASSUME THEY WILL LEAVE AS MUCH EQUIPMENT IN HANDS OF THEIR SUPPORTERS AS POSSIBLE. IF IT HAD THE RESOURCES AND SOPHISTICATION, ATHENS COULD CAUSE CONSIDERABLE TROUBLE FOR MAKARIOS BY COMBINING

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SECOND COURSE OF ACTION WITH A PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN TO "PROVE" THAT HE IS DETACHING CYPRUS FROM HELLENISM. FROM INDICATIONS TO DATE, WE DOUBT THAT ATHENS CAN REALLY ORCHESTRATE SUCH A CAMPAIGN, WHICH IS PROBABLY FORTUNATE FROM STANDPOINT OF LONG-TERM INTERESTS OF ATHENS AND NICOSIA, AND INDEED OF OURSELVES.

9. WE ASSUME THAT INTENSIVE ATHENS/ANKARA CONFRONTATION WILL TEND DISSUADE GOGREECE FROM PUTTING DEVELOPMENTS IN MOTION IN CYPRUS, OUTCOME OF WHICH IT CANNOT PREDICT WITH CONFIDENCE. AN ATHENS/ANKARA "UNDERSTANDING" ON CYPRUS WOULD SEEM PARTICULARLY UNLIKELY RIGHT NOW, AND WITHOUT IT ATHENS WOULD FACE A VERY HIGH PROBABILITY OF TURKISH INVOLVEMENT IF IT PRECIPITATED VIOLENCE HERE.

DAVIES

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